THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (PROF. P.J. KURIEN): Hon. Members, I think, the hon. Minister of External Affairs has to share something with the House.

INFORMATION TO THE HOUSE

Postponement of Execution of Shri Sarabjit Singh

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, with your permission, I have the privilege and pleasure of sharing a piece of information with the hon. Members. The High Commission of India in Islamabad has been informed a little while ago by the Pakistani Foreign Office that the President of Pakistan has stayed the execution of Sarabjit Singh till 30th April, that is, a postponement by one month. As all the hon. Members had expressed their deep concern to save the life of Sarabjit Singh, I thought I should share this information at the earliest opportunity. Thank you, Sir, for giving me the permission.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (PROF. P. J. KURIEN): Thank you, hon. Minister for this information. Now Shri Jaswant Singh.

DISCUSSION ON STATEMENT MADE BY MINISTER

Foreign Policy-Related Developments

THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): Sir, at the very first instance, I would like to express our collective sense of relief that even though the announced punishment is delayed only by a month, but, still, it is delayed, and, perhaps, that month offers the required time for us to have the matter totally re-examined. No doubt, Sir, the hon. Minister of External Affairs, the Government as also our Mission in Islamabad, are worthy of commendation for this act of humanity.

Sir, I have a few preliminary observations to make. My first observation is this. It is my understanding that when we have a Statement in the House, the hon. Members then seek clarifications and in this case that cannot be because we have started a Short Duration Discussion. Whoever has visited as the Minister undertaken the responsibility of answering the queries of the House. I have, Sir, the highest consideration and regards for hon. Pranabbabu. He is an experienced Member of the Union Cabinet. He has held this portfolio earlier too, and has conducted his present charge with great expertise and sureness. But, I believe, that a number of these visits have been undertaken by the Prime Minister. He is the Leader of this House. Unless he is so preoccupied that he can't spare the time, we would have preferred a response from the hon. Prime Minister. That not-withstanding, Sir, I am going to limit what I have to say only to the Statement of the hon. External Affairs Minister of 3rd March. There is firstly, Sir, a sense of certain disappointment; and, then, in advance, I would like to offer my apologies to the hon. External Affairs Minister. My sense of disappointment is in the relegation of this very important subject. It is only because of the persistent and energetic efforts by my very able colleague, Shrimati Sushma Swaraj, that we have even managed to get this discussion, short duration discussion, today.